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PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM ODOMETER FRAUD

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GEORGE H. RYAN
SECRETARY OF STATE

A message from the Secretary

Many of the Illinois laws are intended to protect car buyers from the practice of concealing a car's true mileage by turning back or disconnecting the odometer. The laws recognize that true mileage is an important indicator of a vehicle's condition and reflects a vehicle's anticipated reliability and probability of costly repairs.

The law prohibits odometer tampering and requires anyone who sells a motor vehicle to disclose the accuracy of its odometer reading. All sellers of a motor vehicle are subject to the law - private citizens as well as car dealers.

For more information contact one of the Department of Police offices listed on the back.

This informational brochure was created by my office's Department of Police to alert the public to the problem of odometer rollbacks and provide information protecting the public from unwittingly purchasing a tampered vehicle. This brochure outlines general guidelines for vehicle purchasers; it does not attempt to provide every detail of the law.

George H. Ryan

GEORGE H. RYAN
Secretary of State

ODOMETER CERTIFICATION —

Chapter 625 ILCS 5/3-112.1

This law requires a written mileage disclosure statement for all vehicles, except vehicles having a gross vehicle weight rating of 16,000 pounds or more, vehicles 10 years old or older, and vehicles manufactured without an odometer.

The seller must provide the purchaser with a written statement of the registered mileage. The statement must be completed prior to the sale. The statement must include:

1. The odometer reading at the time of the sale/transfer.
2. The date of the sale/transfer.
3. The seller's name, address and signature.
4. A complete vehicle description.
5. The vehicle identification number.
6. The purchaser's name, address and signature.

PURCHASING FROM A LICENSED VEHICLE DEALER IN ILLINOIS

The Illinois licensed vehicle dealer must provide:

1. A bill of sale.
2. An odometer statement.
3. A copy of the Illinois Tax Form.

TEST DRIVE AND INSPECT THE VEHICLE.

1. When driving, does the odometer progress properly?
2. Check the brakes.
3. Check the steering and alignment.
4. Check the acceleration.
5. Are the tires new or mismatched?
- Low mileage vehicles typically have the original tires.
6. Have parts been replaced that normally would not be replaced on a low mileage vehicle? Check the following:
   batteries hoses and clamps belts
7. Look for excessive wear in the interior:
   seats floor mats brake pedal
8. Do the above reflect the condition of a low mileage vehicle?

GET A SECOND OPINION.

1. Have a qualified mechanic examine the vehicle. This may help you avoid unexpected repair costs.

2. Do not sign blank documents. An unscrupulous dealer may complete the document to his benefit only.

REVIEW THE TITLE PRIOR TO THE PURCHASE OF THE VEHICLE.

1. The vehicle's current mileage should be greater than the mileage shown on the title.

2. Alterations or eraser marks make the title invalid.

NEVER purchase a vehicle with an altered title.

3. The dealer must have a title. If you are told that he does not have the title, do not purchase the vehicle until he provides the title.

PURCHASING A VEHICLE FROM A NON-DEALER

Everything that applies to a licensed used vehicle dealer also applies to a private seller except:

1. Providing a bill of sale.
2. An Illinois Tax Form.

Things you should consider and questions you should ask.

1. Who is the owner? Does the seller's identification match the name on the title?

2. Where are you meeting to look at the vehicle? Does the location appear to be a permanent residence or merely a temporary meeting place? If a problem arises, will you be able to find the seller?

3. Verify the telephone number of the seller. Unlisted numbers or pager numbers are difficult to trace should problems arise with the vehicle.

4. Determine the reason the vehicle is being sold:
   a. family financial hardship
   b. seller needs ready cash
   c. vehicle has mechanical problems

Avoid purchasing the vehicle if it is being sold "for a family member or friend who has moved out of state or out of the country."

5. Does it appear that other vehicles at the site are also for sale? This may indicate illegal sales activity.

6. Verify the issue date on the vehicle title. Is it a recently issued title? Does the issue date coincide with the seller's reasons for disposing of the vehicle?

7. Does the seller seem to be an "experienced" vehicle seller or merely an average citizen selling a vehicle? A sales pitch that seems too professional may indicate the seller has sold many other vehicles and is therefore not selling just this one vehicle.

8. Pay attention to the seller's story concerning the vehicle and his personal information. Inconsistencies often indicate illegal sales.

SHOP AROUND AND COMPARE VEHICLES OF A SIMILAR MAKE, AGE AND CONDITION.

1. How does this vehicle compare with a similar model from another seller?

2. Is the price of a low-mileage vehicle the same as a similar high-mileage vehicle seen elsewhere?

3. Is the deal too good to be true? If it is, avoid it. Getting something for almost nothing only happens in fairy tales.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM A VICTIM OF ODOMETER FRAUD?

You can contact an attorney and sue the person responsible for the fraud.

According to Illinois law (Chapter 625 ILCS 5/3-112.1), a person may be awarded $1,500 or three times the amount of damages plus court costs and attorney fees in fraud cases.

The Secretary of State Department of Police can investigate a criminal complaint which is filed against a person accused of fraudulent practices.

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For more Information,
contact the closest Secretary of State Department of Police office

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405 No. Mannheim Road
Bellwood, IL 60104
(708) 338-7555

SOS Police District #2
4501 East State Street
Rockford, IL 61108
(815) 987-7560

SOS Police District #3
324 West Monroe St.
Springfield, IL 62756
(217) 785-5486

SOS Police District #4
220 South 12th Street
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864
(618) 244-4525

INTERNET: http://www.sos.state.il.us

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